

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-13 SCCT-01 ACDA-07 SAJ-01 SAM-01 /092 W

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R 051409Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8993

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 5173

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE

SUBJECT: TALK WITH LEBANESE/CHRISTIAN JOURNALIST ABOUT  
CURRENT PHASE OF CIVIL WAR

1. EMBOFF MET AUG. 4 WITH HARES CHEHAB, LEBANESE CHRISTIAN  
JOURNALIST WHO PRESENTLY EDITOR OF BEIRUTI ARAB NEWS AGENCY,  
RELATIVE OF FORMER PRES. FUAD CHEHAB AND FRIEND OF PRES-  
ELECT SARKIS. HE VISITING DAMASCUS TO ARRANGE SYRIAN  
FUNDING FOR HIS PUBLICATION.

2. CHEHAB REPORTED THAT HE JOURNEYED TO DAMASCUS VIA  
UYUN AL-SIMAN ROAD, AND CLAIMED IT ENTIRELY SECURE. HE  
SAID LEFTIST FORCES HAD BEEN PUSHED BACK AT LEAST  
TEN KILOMETERS FROM ROAD.

3. HE SAID HE TRYING TO FOLLOW INTERNAL LEBANESE EVENTS  
CLOSELY, AND STATED THAT IN HIS VIEW ARAFAT UNDER INTENSE  
PRESSURE FROM PALESTINIAN REJECTIONIST ELEMENTS  
TO REJECT DAMASCUS ACCORD. CONSEQUENTLY, ARAFAT FORCED  
TO ADOPT TOUGH PUBLIC LINE WITH SYRIA WHILE HE MANUEVER-  
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ING TO FORGE PLO CONSENSUS IN FAVOR OF RECONCILIATION WITH

DAMASCUS. ACCORDING TO CHEHAB, ALMOST EVERY PALESTINIAN GROUP, WITH POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF GEORGE HABASH'S PFLP, HAS UNDERGONE INTERNAL SPLIT. EVEN PFLP-GC OF AHMAD JABRIL, LONG CONSIDERED CLOSE TO DAMASCUS REGIME, HAS SPAWNED FACTION HEADED BY ABU AL-ABBAS WHICH OPPOSED TO ASSOCIATION WITH SARG. CHEHAB STATED QADDUMI PRESENTLY IN DAMASCUS TO ARRANGE IMPLEMENTATION OF DAMASCUS ACCORD AND ARAFAT VISIT. HE ADDED THAT ONE OF THE UNPUBLISHED TERMS OF DAMASCUS ACCORD WAS SYRIAN AGREEMENT TO PULL ITS FORCES BACK SHORT DISTANCE FROM SOFAR ONCE CEASEFIRE IN EFFECT.

4. CHEHAB BELIEVES THAT SYRIANS AND LEBANESE SERIOUS ABOUT PACIFYING SOUTH LEBANON. CITING CONVERSATION WITH JEZZIN DEPUTY EDMOND RIZQ, WHO HE SAID PRESENTLY IN DAMASCUS WITH LEBANESE CHRISTIAN DELEGATION ALSO INCLUDING DANNY CHAMOUN AND KARIM PAKRADOUNI FOR TALKS WITH SARG LEADERSHIP, CHEHAB SAID SYRIANS REALIZE THEY MADE MISTAKE IN PULLING BACK SO HASTILY FROM SIDON, WHICH IMMEDIATELY BECAME ENTREPOT FOR MILITARY SUPPLIES FROM EGYPT, SOVIET UNION, ETC. HE STATED SYRIANS NOW OBSERVING WITH SATIS-' FACTION THAT SOVIETS BEGINNING TO SHIFT THEIR POLICY IN MORE PRO-SYRIAN DIRECTION VIS-A-VIS PALESTINIANS AND JUMBLATT. CITED AS ONE BIT OF EVIDENCE HAS DISCUSSION SAME MORNING WITH SANA EDITOR WHO SHOWED HIM RECENT PRAVDA ARTICLE ON LEBANON WHICH IN VIEW OF SANA OFFICIAL SHOWED GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF SYRIAN POSITION THAN SOVIETS HAS HERETOFORE DISPLAYED.

5. CHEHAB SAID HE HAD TALKED WITH SARKIS FEW DAYS AGO AND FOUND HIM CONFIDENT OF HIS ABILITY TO RESOLVE SITUATION ONCE CEASEFIRE WORKED OUT. UNTIL THEN, SARKIS RELUCTANT TO BECOME TOO DEEPLY INVOLVED IN ANOTHER ROUND OF CONTACTS.

6. CHEHAB THEN INTRODUCED EMBOFF TO COL. HEAN NASSIF, WHO HAD ACCOMPANIED HIM TO DAMASCUS TO TALK WITH SYRIAN OFFICIALS AFTER NASSIF LEFT ROOM, HE DESCRIBED HIM AS ONE OF THE ORIGINAL CHEHABIST DEUXIEME BUREAU OPERATIVES. HE WAS NOW WORKING WITH SARKIS, AND HIS BROTHER HEADED CONFIDENTIAL

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SARKIS' MILITARY BUREAU. HE ADDED THAT COL NASSIF WAS AN ARCHITECT OF LEBANESE ARMY VANGUARDS ESTABLISHED WITH SYRIAN ASSISTANCE, AND SAID IN HIS VIEW IT SHOULD BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AS POTENTIAL MULTI-CONFESSIONAL SECURITY FORCE. HE SAID IT LARGELY CHRISTIAN BUT CONTAINED SOME MUSLIMS, INCLUDING ONE OF ITS COMMANDERS, IBRAHIM SHAHIN. LEBANESE AIR FORCE PILOT, MUHAMMAD MATAR, ALSO BELONGED TO VANGUARDS AND WAS MUSLIM.

7. COMMENT: CHEHAB'S COMMENTS ON PALESTINIAN  
INTERNAL SPLITS STRIKE US AS GENERALLY ACCURATE. HIS  
REMARK ABOUT PRAVDA ARTICLE OR AT LEAST SYRIAN INTER-  
PRETATION OF IT, WERE BORNE OUT BY AUG. 5 SYRIAN PRESS,  
WHICH PUBLISHED SUMMARY OF IT IN TISHRIIN ARTICLE  
ON SYRO-PALESTINIAN NEGOTIATIONS. HIS SUGGESTION THAT  
VANGUARDS HAVE POTENTIAL AS SERIOUS MILITARY FORCE IS  
OF INTEREST BUT PERHAPS PREMATURE. ROLE OF CHEHABIST  
MILITARY OFFICERS SUPPORTIVE OF SARKIS REMINDS US OF  
COMMENT MFA AMERICAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR SHOULFI MADE ABOUT  
ASAD-SARKIS RELATIONSHIP. ACCORDING TO SHOULFI, A PRIMARY  
APPEAL OF SARKIS WAS EASY WORKING RELATIONSHIP WHICH SARG  
HAS ESTABLISHED WITH CHEHABIST OFFICERS CLUSTERED AROUND  
PRES-ELECT. SHOULFI OBSERVED ASAD MUCH PREFERRED TO DEAL  
THROUGH MILITARY/INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS WHEN POSSIBLE  
RATHER THAN WITH INDEPENDENT POLITICIANS LIKE RAYMOND  
EDDE.  
MURPHY

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